



War and Modernism

Ernest Hemingway's

"A Soldier's Home"

Randall Jarrell's

"Death of a Ball Turret Gunner"

Name _____

Date _____ Class _____

Hemingway's "A Soldier's Home"

1. Hemingway once wrote, "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things he knows, and the reader – if the writer is writing truly enough – will have a feeling of those things as strongly if the writer had stated them." What impressions not stated directly but almost suggested by omission have you formed of this young American? What do you think another writer would include?
2. What kind of person was Krebs before the war? What does the description in the first paragraph tell you about him? Why does the narrator mention that the fraternity brothers were all "wearing exactly the same height and style collar"?
3. Why does the story mention the names of these battles: "Belleau Wood, Soissons, the Champagne, St. Mihiel . . . and the Argonne"? What experiences is Hemingway trying to evoke by using these names? In what ways was World War I different from previous wars?
4. Look closely at the language in this passage (or any other passage in the story):

"Nothing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up. But they lived in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds that Krebs did not feel the energy or the courage to break into it. He liked to look at them, though. There were so many good-looking young girls. Most of them had their hair cut short. When he went away only little girls wore their hair like that or girls that were fast. They all wore sweaters and shirt waists with round Dutch collars. It was a pattern. He liked to look at them from the front porch as they walked on the other side of the street. He liked to watch them walking under the shade of the trees. He liked the round Dutch collars above their sweaters. He liked their silk stockings and flat shoes. He liked their bobbed hair and the way they walked" (349).

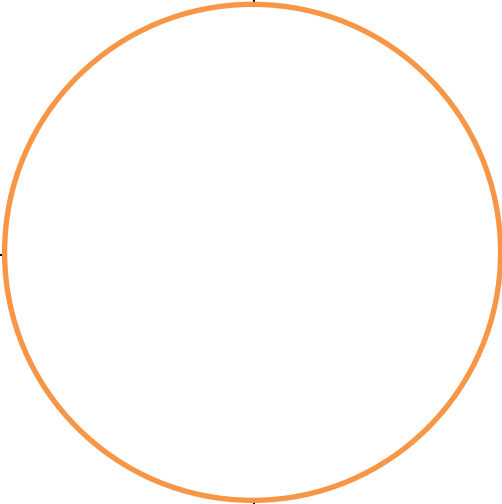
What words or sentence patterns are repeated? What is conveyed by this repetition, and how does it help you to understand Krebs? What does he focus on as he watches the girls? Why does he find the "already defined alliances and shifting feuds" too "complicated" for him?
5. Krebs thinks a lot about "lies" in this story. What kinds of lies does he tell or refuse to tell? Why do they nauseate him? In what way might this be connected to his war experiences?
6. What is Krebs's relationship with his sister like? How does he respond differently to her than to the other girls or women in the story? What does she represent for him? (Think about Holden and Phoebe)

7. The scene with Krebs and his mother parallels the earlier scene with his sister, but his mother's demands provoke a very different reaction from him. What does she want from him? What is she afraid has happened to him? How does she seek to control him? Does she succeed?
8. What do you think happens at the end of the story? Why does he decide to watch his sister play indoor baseball?

Jarrell’s “Death of a Ball Turret Gunner”

9. What is the poem’s metaphor (begun in line one)? How does Jarrell extend the metaphor throughout the poem?
10. Is Jarrell presenting an objective or subjective view of war? How does the speaker of the poem view his experience as a ball turret gunner? What is Jarrell’s aim in writing this poem? What is his tone toward the subject of the poem?
11. If you were the speaker, would you think you were fighting a “good war,” as World War II was sometimes called? Why, or why not?

Write down one quote from each of the works that addresses birth and death.
 Then write a statement of theme that the two works share (in the circle) – consider why both authors use imagery of birth and death and how this imagery impacts/develops meaning in the two works.

	Hemingway’s “A Soldier’s Home”	Jarrell’s “Death of a Ball Turret Gunner”
BIRTH		
DEATH		